

# THE END OF A ROPE.



It was a bright spring morning on a Texas farm. A girl with a fair sweet face, and soft, hazel eyes, whose long, dark lashes only partly veiled their tender light, and a mass of dark hair flowing loosely over her shoulders from beneath a broad-brimmed sun-hat. Her pretty blue dress became her graceful figure. Altogether Nora Neville was worth looking at as she stood beside the glossy black pony, her little hand lightly caressing its dainty head. Belle—the pony—had just been purchased and presented to Nora by her indulgent father. Near by stood Frank Barrett, a handsome young stranger, who had been for a few weeks employed upon the Neville farm. It was his first experience as a farmer, but he was fast becoming proficient, and the outdoor exercise was rapidly giving him health and strength.

"Isn't she a beauty?" she persisted. "Frank! I really believe you do not like my pet. You have not spoken one word of praise."

"Miss Nora, I'll tell you the truth," he said, slowly. "I don't like the looks of Belle. There is a lurking devil in her eyes. I am afraid she is hardly safe. You must let me break her in more before you ride her!"

"I won't," and Nora brought her dainty little foot down firmly. "I can ride any horse for miles around here. And I don't believe a word you say about Belle. See how gentle she is! It's a shame to say such things, just to annoy me! It is not very manly to take the course you do toward me! I think you are a—"

She paused a moment, as if for second thought—but it was too late—the angry words were upon her tongue—"a coward! I believe you are afraid to ride this gentle pony!"

Frank Barrett's handsome face flushed crimson. He started as if he had been struck—an involuntary exclamation escaped his lips, but he turned quickly, that the wilful Nora might not see how deeply her taunts had hurt him.

Sometimes ashamed of her own petulance, Nora turned hastily away, and a little later her graceful figure had entered the long, low farmhouse. Frank Barrett watched her until she was out of sight.

"My darling!" he murmured, softly. "my wilful little darling! She is like a rose, full of thorns and sweetness; as wilful as the soft Southern breezes that play about her home. Little does she dream that I have dared to lift my eyes to her! She, the only child of Tom Neville, the cattle king!"

"Hullo there!"

A horse shout fell upon the silence and a man, mounted upon a big white horse, covered with gaudy trappings, and with much jingling of spurs, suddenly appeared upon the scene. A stranger to Frank Barrett, who turned eagerly about and faced the intruder. A dark, bearded face, with hard black eyes, and a devil-may-care expression. A broad-brimmed sombrero was pulled well down over his brows; his eyes were shifty and did not meet the frank gaze of the young farm-hand.

"Have you seen anything of a black pony around here?" the stranger in-



"You're going to do nothing of the sort!" quired eagerly—"a pretty little mare, with a white star on her forehead. By Jove!" turning with a start, "there she is, over yonder!"

"I think you are mistaken," returned Frank, slowly, "that horse belongs to Tom Neville. I imagine you've heard of him? He bought the horse this morning, as a gift to his daughter."

"Humph! Reckon I know Neville, for I'm a neighbor of his. My name is

Judge Strong, and I take the horse, reckon I'll take her too. She's a wild little thing, and can be had for the asking, sir."

But he never finished. Frank Barrett had sprung forward, and, seizing the horse by the bits, threw the animal back upon its haunches, while with the stick which he held in his hand, he rained a shower of blows upon Mr. Jasper Darke's face and shoulders.

"You cowardly villain!" Frank panted between his set teeth, "to dare speak of her in that insulting manner. I give you three minutes to get out of my sight, or it will be the worse for you! Go!"

The man seemed quite cowed. He sat meekly in the saddle, and, turning his horse's head in an opposite direction, rode swiftly away. A few rods distant, he turned and glanced back. In his eyes an evil expression was lurking—he looked dangerous.

"I am going," he said in a low tone, but Frank caught every word that he spoke. "But I intend to pay you back for this—whatever you are—if I die in the attempt."

"Papa! What do you think? Belle is gone! I'm afraid she has been stolen. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Gone! Belle gone? Why, Nora, that's out of the question. She was looked in the stable last night. Nobody has access to the key but myself and—yes—Frank! Go ask Frank about your pony. He may have taken her out to exercise her. She's a dainty bit of horseflesh, and well worth the three hundred and fifty I paid for her!"

"But, papa, I can't find Frank! Nobody has seen him this morning. Oh, dear! I'm afraid that something has happened!"

"Frank not here? Why, where can he be, I wonder? Nora, I didn't like to say anything about it before, but I received an anonymous letter, yesterday evening, warning me against this Frank Barrett. You know he is a stranger to us, after all! The letter adds: 'Watch your stable well, for Barrett is a horse-thief!' You know, Nora, how a horse-thief is considered here in Texas."

"The same as a murderer!" she answered, dejectedly, "and they string up a horse-thief just as though he had taken a human life. But, papa, it's simply absurd to think even of such a thing in connection with Frank Barrett. The man or woman who would write an anonymous letter, vilifying the character of another, would stab a man in the back!"

"Bravo! my dear! And, Nora, I rather think you are right concerning Frank. I like the boy. I will go and make inquiries in regard to him!"

That very day, Mr. Jasper Darke rode over to the Neville farm-house, with the intelligence that the horse, Belle, was really his own property, but had been stolen from him and sold to Mr. Neville.

"They say," went on Darke, eagerly, "that the thief is caught, however—the man who stole Belle from you, Neville. Shall we ride over to Laredo? The thief is there—or near there, I am told."

"With pleasure," answered Tom Neville, grimly. "What's the matter, Nora, child?"

"I am going with you, papa—that's all. Don't say a word against it. I can ride Selma, and I want to go!"

Out of place though it seemed, Tom Neville could never refuse his child anything that she asked. So, a little later, the three set out for the eight mile ride to Laredo.

Near the Neville farm, they overtook an elderly man, riding leisurely along. At sight of Neville he reined in his steed with a courtly bow.

"I am Judge Strong, from Dallas," he said, courteously. "I am looking for a young man named Barrett—Frank Barrett."

"So are we!" interposed Neville, sternly. Then he related the story, Judge Strong's face grew grave. Then he smiled.

"I think you are mistaken," he returned, quietly. "However, we will ride on to Laredo and learn all the particulars."

But the end came sooner than they expected. In the woods, half way to Laredo, they came upon a dreadful scene. A group of rough-bearded men gathered about a tall pine tree, from one of the limbs a rope dangled, and under the tree, pale and calm, the end of the rope fastened about his neck, stood Frank Barrett.

Belle, the pony, was tethered a little distance away. At sight of the approaching party, one of the men shouted, hoarsely:

"We've got him, Neville! Here's the thief who stole your horse! We are going to swing him up!"

"You're going to do nothing of the sort," cried Nora Neville, springing from her horse. And before the astonished men could recover from their amazement, she had drawn a knife, and severed the rope about Frank Barrett's neck, and thrust a loaded revolver into his hand.

"Defend yourself, Frank!" she cried bravely. "I know you are innocent—oh, my love!"

For all at once, the truth had come home to her heart, and she knew that

Judge Strong came to the rescue. "Gentlemen," he cried in a commanding voice, "I am not aware that this young man—Frank Barrett—is the son and heir of a Dallas millionaire! He came out here to work in the fields to regain his lost health. His father has grown weary of waiting for him to come home, and sent me after him. Touch him at your peril!"

Of course it was all settled. As they rode on slowly back to the Neville farm-house, Frank explained that he had taken Belle from the stable, intending to break her and train her, so that she would be safer for Nora to ride. And, knowing Nora's perversity, he had thought best to make the attempt privately. Then he told the story of Jasper Darke's conduct, and the authorship of the anonymous letter was made plain to all. It was a merry party that took possession of the Neville farm-house that night.

And the next morning, when Frank Barrett rode away with his old friend, Judge Strong, it was all arranged that when he should return, a few weeks later, Nora would become his wife.

## A THRILLING EXPERIENCE.

An Artist on a Sketching Tour Drops Into a Nest of Snakes.

"I had an experience last year which I think was sufficiently thrilling to satisfy the most adventurous mind," said A. B. Cooper, a St. Louis artist, to a Globe-Democrat man. "I was down in Georgia on a sketching tour, and one afternoon wandered off into the forest and sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree to contemplate the beauties of nature. I had only been there a few minutes when my interest was riveted on the wonderful saffron and gray hues of one of the exposed roots of a tree near where I was sitting. These views were almost metallic, and I regretted that I had not brought my colors with me, so that I could make a note of them. In gazing about me I observed on one of the interlacing boughs above me a similar effect, though this time it was of a greenish-black tint.

"While sitting and admiring these lovely effects of color, to which the sun gave tinsel beauty, I was suddenly seized with a sensation, which even now I recall with a sense of horror; in that second of time I realized that a green snake of considerable size was staring at me with its luminous, flame-colored eyes, within a short distance from where I sat. The next instant I happily recovered myself, and started to my feet. At the same moment the saffron-gray trunk near me, which I had so greatly admired only a few minutes before, slowly unwound itself; it was another reptile of the same kind. My supposed greenish-black, metallic tinted bough had at the same instant wriggled down to an open space, unpleasantly near my feet, and several tendril branches, as I had supposed them, as I had supposed them, began to be commenced to show signs of snaky animation. In fact, much to my consternation, I found myself to be in a very bad way. I looked up, and the green snake was literally alive with them.

"I am no naturalist, and I cannot give you their names, neither can I tell whether their bite would kill a buffalo or a butterfly, but I only know that it was with a feeling of immense relief that I found myself safe upon the highway, and lost no time in putting a considerable distance between myself and that dreaded spot.

Glad to See It Go.

Besides the golden eagle, the great auk, the coo, the white whale, and other items of creation which have vanished or are threatening to vanish from the world it is encouraging to hear of the gradual extinction of one really noxious inhabitant—the alligator. Florida hunters claim to have accounted for over 2,500,000 of these pests, and when it is considered how slowly they grow there seems a reasonable chance of their extermination, at any rate in the haunts of men. At 1 year old the infant alligator is twelve inches long. He is 15 before he doubles that length, and he does not attain his maximum development until the age of 50. His period of life is not fixed, but it is certainly greater than that of man.

## The Ancient Postal Note.

The old form of postal note has been entirely abolished. A new form of money order, superseding the postal note and the old form of money order, came into use July 1. The new orders are more like postal notes, coupons being attached to show the amount they carry. The charges for the new orders range from three to thirty cents.

## Two Women to One Man.

The membership of the Congregational church is composed of 188,187 males and 373,444 females. This is nearly two to one. Last year the number of deaths of ministers was ninety-eight. The average age of these ninety-eight ministers was 68 years 5 months and 25 days.

## Weather Prophet.

Weather Prophet—I hit it again. I never fail.

Ordinary Man—Huh! The thermometer has dropped twenty degrees, and it is raining pitchforks. You predicted fair and warmer.

Weather Prophet—I predicted fair and warmer, with increased humidity. I may have been a trifle off in the fair and warmer, but you can deny the humidity, sir—no, sir!"

Philosophy of Getting Rich.

Perhaps the thermometer was not 160 in the smoking room of that parlor car. The fat man said it was, and the other passengers were inclined to let it go at that. At any rate it was hot enough for all practical purposes, and the entire company of smokers had stripped off coats and vests and loosened suspenders and unbuttoned collars, and were listening with eager attention to the tales of the returned Arctic traveler.

The fat man was gloating over a particularly realistic description of an ice-boat which was three miles long and a mile wide and no one knows how many miles deep. He had announced his intention of emigrating to Greenland and settling there, when the train drew into Little Falls and stopped. A couple of small boys stood on the platform crying: "strawberries! Nice fresh strawberries!" They had a few boxes of luscious fruit covered over with fresh green leaves and the fat man made a bolt for the platform and bought a quart. The other people in the smoking room followed his example. They found that the berries were as nice as they looked and the price was fifteen cents a box. Five men bought a box each and turned them over to the porter of the buffet car, telling him to serve them as soon as he could get them ready.

The sixth man was an old fellow with a hooked nose and a big yellow diamond in his necktie. "How much is these berries?" he asked.

"Fifteen cents a quart," replied the boy.

"I'll give you ten for a box."

"No!"

There was a long argument between the man and the boy. Finally the train began to move and the old man said: "Better take ten cents. You will have them left on your hands."

"Oh," said the boy, "there'll be another train along in a little while and then I'll sell them."

"Well, I'll give you ten cents for a box."

"No!" shouted the boy and the old man climbed back into the car.

In a short time the buffet man brought the strawberries into the smoking room and the five owners ate them with great relish. The old man watched the eaters out of the corners of his eyes. No person offered him any, although he plainly wanted an invitation. After the dishes had been removed and silence had fallen on the company, the old man said: "Well, I made money either way you look at it. If I buy do berries I made five cents, but if I didn't buy do berries I made ten cents."

"And that," said the fat man moistly, "is the philosophy of getting rich."

## An Estate Obtained by a Fox.

Land transfer has lost a great deal of the simplicity which characterized the operation in the olden time. The pleasant land of Hosham, in Sussex, once belonged to the archbishop of Canterbury, but was much coveted by Earl Godwin, supporter of the last of the Saxon kings, whose treasury was unfortunately too empty to purchase it. He obtained the place by a novel system of land transfer. His lordship attended a great ceremony in the archbishop's cathedral, followed by his retainers, and in accordance to time-honored custom, said to his grace, "Da mihi basium," meaning "Give me the kiss of peace;" only instead of saying "basium" he ingeniously substituted the provincial pronunciation of Hosham. The bishop graciously replied, "Do tibi basium," which, being interpreted, is "I give thee the kiss," which he did. But Godwin cried, "Thou hast given me Hosham," to which all his retainers cried, "Why certainly," and the whole crew at once rode off to take possession of the pleasant Sussex territory. The archbishop could not help himself and allowed the transfer to go on. The law has greatly complicated matters since then.—London Telegraph.

## Merely a Matter of Taste.

They were talking about the wonders of this wonderful land.

"I wish you could see our town of Pokerville, professor," said the younger of the two men. "It is a most interesting town—only twenty years old and with 50,000 inhabitants."

"Ah—yes—very interesting, no doubt," replied the professor, dryly. "But, strange as it may seem, I should prefer myself a town 50,000 years old and with only twenty inhabitants."—Boston Budget.

## A Specimen Prediction.

Weather Prophet—I hit it again. I never fail.

Ordinary Man—Huh! The thermometer has dropped twenty degrees, and it is raining pitchforks. You predicted fair and warmer.

Weather Prophet—I predicted fair and warmer, with increased humidity. I may have been a trifle off in the fair and warmer, but you can deny the humidity, sir—no, sir!"

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At the recent World's Fair the examinations for the baking powder awards were made by the experts of the chemical division of the Agricultural Department of Washington. The official report of the tests of the baking powders which were made by this department for the specific purpose of ascertaining which was the best, and which has been made public, shows the leavening strength of the Royal to be 100 cubic inches of carbonic gas per ounce of powder. Of the cream of tartar baking powders exhibited at the fair, the next highest in strength thus tested contained but 135 cubic inches of leavening gas. The other powders gave an average of 111. The Royal, therefore, was found to be 20 per cent greater leavening strength than its nearest competitor, and 44 per cent above the average of all the other tests. Its superiority in other respects, however, in the quality of the food it makes as to fineness, delicacy and wholesomeness, could not be measured by figures.

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